

Camp Williams grows to fit needs of government, state

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Special to The Daily Herald

The May 9, 1914, Lehi Banner announced: "Acting on the executive order of President Woodrow Wilson, the United States land office on Tuesday formally withdrew 18,700 acres of government land immediately west of Jordan Narrows for a military reservation and maneuver ground for the Utah National Guard."

This site, six miles northwest of Lehi, was initially named Camp Wedgewood, in honor of Edgar A. Wedgewood, adjutant general of Utah. The terrain, rugged and uneven, presented the type of topography troops were likely to encounter in actual warfare. A flat benchland area was large enough to accommodate camp sites for several regiments. Elsewhere the land consisted of steep foothills, deep ravines and Beef Hollow, a large arroyo several miles in length.

Wilson's order stipulated that the land was to be used permanently by the Utah National Guard for joint maneuvers of the militia of several states and the regular Army. He also allowed for target ranges for small arms and artillery.

On June 26, 1927, the state purchased an additional 153 acres of land for \$1,461, and in 1931 obtained 199 more acres for \$2,533.

World War I postponed the construction of facilities at Jordan Narrows. From 1914 to 1922 it was used just once. After 1926, however, it began to be used on a regular, permanent basis for annual encampments. In 1928 the camp was named for Brig. Gen. W.G. Williams, who as adjutant general was the prime mover in seeing that the camp was established as a permanent training site.

At first Camp Williams consisted of two-men pup tents for the soldiers and corrals for the horses (some National Guard units were cavalry groups until 1941). As

time went on, new, more permanent and more modern facilities were constructed — 16-foot pyramidal tents for the troops and 9-by-9 wall tents for the officers, with wooden pallets for floors.



In 1927 the state constructed (with federal assistance) 147 of these tent floors, two latrines and bathhouses, 10 mess halls, 10 hayracks and mangers, and 19 watering troughs, at a cost of \$56,420.

The following year an administration building and recreation hall were built, and an electric light system was added. During 1929 another bathhouse and mess hall were constructed along with a post exchange, infirmary, 11 shelters for animals and a corral at the Orem Interurban railroad station to the camp's east.

By 1934, during the depths of the Great Depression, total expenditures for construction at Camp Williams totaled \$246,124. Nearly 75 percent of these funds came from the federal government. Most of the state's \$54,829 expenditure was used to construct the recreation hall, the caretaker cottage and the Hostess House.

This Hostess House, a WPA project, was designed by architect Edward O. Anderson for receptions and for an officers' club. It is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a popular spot for weddings and other private receptions.

Guardsmen who trained at Camp Williams during the 1920s and 1930s were among the first Utahns inducted into military service prior to World War II. On March, 1941, nine months before Pearl Harbor, the government activated all units of the Utah National Guard, including Lehi's own Service Battery of the 222nd Field Artillery.

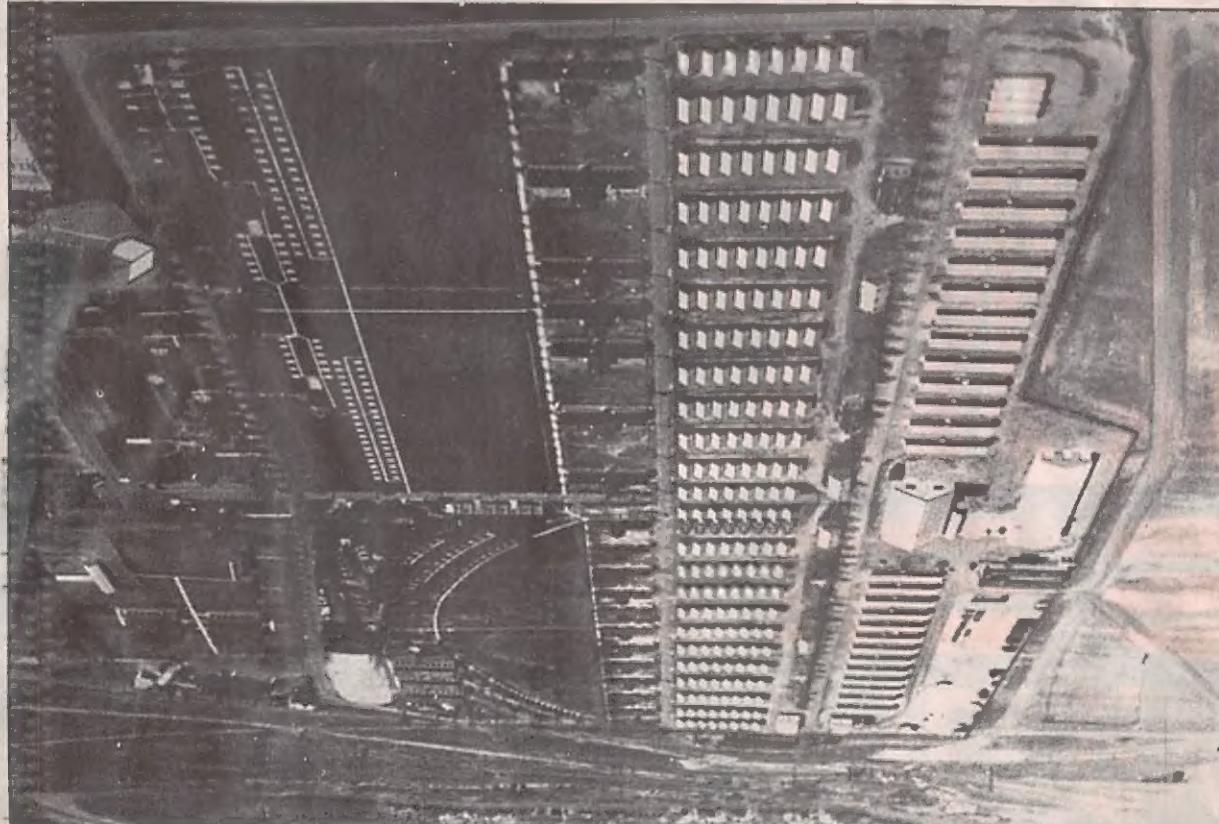
While these Utah units served gallantly on both the Pacific and European fronts, the National Guard made Camp Williams available as a sub-post and training site for regular Army troops stationed at Fort Douglas.

"Perspiring troops experienced the thrill of battle ... [at the camp] when they crawled through blinding dust over troublesome obstacles — while under actual gunfire ... [on] the 'personal conditioning infiltration course,'" which the Army constructed at Camp Williams.

As a one-regiment facility, Camp Williams was too small for the 5,000 men the Army planned to station there during the war; therefore, the cantonment area was nearly doubled in size. By June 1943, Army engineers had constructed more than 100 buildings, half permanent, half temporary. After the Army completed its training programs, Camp Williams was declared surplus property and returned to the State of Utah in November 1944.

After the war ended, the National Guard had difficulty recruiting veterans to fill roster slots, despite a full-day's pay for each of 48 two-hour drills during the year and full pay for the two-week summer encampment. In 1948 permanent metal frames were installed in concrete tent floors. During 1949 and 1950, four new latrines, a security fence around the ammunition area

This aerial view looking east shows Camp Williams improved with new buildings, an amphitheater and a new water supply system. Photo courtesy of Utah National Guard



Thursday, September 5, 1996 THE DAILY HERALD, Provo, Utah — Page A7

What's Camp Williams? It Has Long, Interesting History and Many Uses

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First of Two Articles

o approximately 34,720 acres.
The terrain offers almost every
feature desired for mineral ex-
ploration. The extremes of the
Jordan River, Utah Lake and sever-
al tributaries provide excellent for am-
phibious training. The many
types of terrain — flat, rolling,
mountainous and glacial — are
ideal for military practice. The
waterways provide bridge build-
ing practice and the various types
of terrain offer good road build-
ing training and military man-
euver practice. There are also
excellent arms training ranges
and small bazooka, machine gun
and excellent armament ranges.
In the summer, but are also ex-
cellent for winter exercises.

BY EDNA LOVERIDGE

were mainly responsible for setting the site.

(Editor's Note: How much do you know about Camp WI-HEMS? Probably not much, except than it is a national guard training camp. But it acutal-ly is used for many other things and has a long and interesting history. This is the first of two articles on